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ABSTRACT

A study identified a list of trade books that educators selected for use in their own classrooms and a list of factors that they considered to be the most important when selecting those books. Subjects, 486 educators who taught in grades 4, 5, or 6 in 45 public school districts and 15 private schools in southeastern Pennsylvania, identified two trade books they had selected and rated 26 factors as to their importance with respect to choosing trade books for classroom instruction. Results indicated that: (1) educators considered factors relating to the content of the book to be more important than the physical features; (2) they were aware that the subject matter should be of interest to the reader and at a level appropriate to the students' reading level and age; (3) they felt that their own review and reading of and materials used by their students was important; (4) students' age was rated as more important than their sex; (5) authors' names were rated as being of little importance; and (6) 88 books were chosen by more than three educators, and 208 were chosen by one or two respondents. Findings suggest that a wide variety of trade books are being chosen for teaching reading and that educators take the time to review and select books which will be appropriate for their classes. (Contains 10 references and two tables of data.) (RS)

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TRADE BOOKS USED IN THE TEACHING OF READING

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Trade Books Used in the Teaching of Reading

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to identify a list of trade books that educators selected for use in their own classes and to identify a list of factors that they considered to be the most important when selecting these books.

Background Rationale

A reading program can be based upon the materials developed specifically for that function (basals), or literature published for other purposes (trade books), or a combination of both types of materials. The basal approach is appealing, because it provides a systematic method and a plan for teachers to follow.

Some educators have recommended that trade books be integrated into the reading program in order to stimulate children to read, enjoy good literature, invite discussion and view a wide variety of written materials (Weisenbach, 1987; Alfonso, 1987; Karrer, 1986; Howell, 1985). Some professionals go so far as to suggest that trade books replace the basal text in the classroom for teaching reading (Veatch, 1986; Koeller, 1981; Higgins, 1986; Sloan, 1980).

With the advent of the whole language approach, trade books are being used more extensively, because teachers feel that it is essential for students to have the opportunity to use children's literature while learning to read. As a result, elementary and middle school teachers across the country are beginning to replace basal series with children's literature (Moss, 1991). In some cases, they are choosing new literature-based series; while in others, teachers are opting to choose their own trade books. It is the latter practice that served as a basis for the present study.

Data Source

The sample for the study consisted of 486 educators who taught in grades 4, 5, or 6 in 45 public school districts and 15 private schools in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Their inclusion in the study depended upon permission by their district superintendents or school heads and their own agreement to participate. The instrument for data collection was developed from a review of the professional literature and pretested by twenty educators before distribution to the study sample.

Method

The respondents were asked to:

1. identify two trade books they, themselves, had selected and used for reading instruction during the past school year; and to

2. rate 26 factors as to their importance with respect to choosing trade books for classroom instruction. Rating of the factors' importance was performed using a Likert scale. The 26 factors were identified for inclusion in the list from considerations suggested in the professional literature for the choice of reading instruction materials.

Results

Two hundred ninety-six (296) different trade books were identified. Eighty-eight were chosen by at least three or more educators. A listing of the most frequently identified books will be provided. Data on the frequency of citation and grade level(s) for which the trade books were chosen will be included.

Factors receiving among the highest and lowest rankings will be presented along with discussion of their relationship to trade book use in reading instruction.

Conclusion

1. Educators consider factors which relate to the content of the book more important than the physical features of the selection.

2. They are aware that the subject matter presented should be of interest to the reader and at a level that is appropriate to the students' reading level and age.

3. They know that their own review and reading of any materials which will be used by their students is important.

4. Physical characteristics such as cover design, illustrations, and name of the publisher are of lesser importance.

5. The age of the students was rated more important than their sex.

6. While a consideration of whether a book is hard bound or paperback may be important from a financial standpoint, it

was not a determining factor in whether the book was chosen by a teacher for use by students.

7 Educators were not necessarily seeking books on the basis of whom they were written by, since the name of the author was rated of little importance.

8. There is a large selection of trade books considered suitable for use in teaching reading. There were a number of books (88) chosen by many (>3) educators, and some which were chosen by only one or two respondents (208).

Educational significance

This study shows that a wide variety of trade books are being chosen for teaching reading and that the educators take the time to review and select books which will be appropriate for their own classes. The list of books presented here should be helpful to the novice as well as the experienced educator as a starting point from which to choose materials for their own review and use.

TABLE 1
Trade Books' Citation Frequency

Times Cited	Book Title	Grade Level 4	5	6
31	Island of the Blue Dolphins	9	13	9
24	Tuck Everlasting	0	9	16
22	Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH	7	7	8
22	The Incredible Journey	5	7	11
22	Where the Red Fern Grows	3	11	8
20	The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	10	8	2
20	The Sign of the Beaver	7	12	1
19	The Bridge to Terabithia	3	12	4
19	From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler	8	9	3
18	The Indian in the Cupboard	7	3	8
17	Charlotte's Web	16	2	0
15	My Side of the Mountain	3	8	4
14	Summer of the Swans	6	5	3
14	The Whipping Boy	7	1	6
13	The Cay	0	12	1
12	The Secret Garden	3	5	4
11	Call It Courage	4	7	0
11	The Pinballs	7	3	1
11	The Trumpet of the Swan	6	5	0
10	Sounder	2	7	1
9	A Wrinkle in Time	4	5	1
9	Dear Mr. Henshaw	7	2	1
9	How to Eat Fried Worms	7	2	0
9	Julie of the Wolves	1	3	5
9	Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing	8	1	0
9	The Cricket in Times Square	9	0	0
9	The Westing Game	0	4	5
8	James and the Giant Peach	7	1	1
8	Sarah, Plain and Tall	7	0	1
8	The Mouse and the Motorcycle	8	0	0

TABLE 1 (continued)
Trade Books' Citation Frequency

Times Cited	Book Title	Grade Level 4	5	6
8	The Push Cart War	0	0	8
8	Tom Sawyer	1	3	4
7	Across Five Aprils	1	3	3
7	Sadako and the 1,000 Paper Cranes	7	0	0
7	Stone Fox	7	0	0
7	The Great Brain	5	1	1
6	Babe, The Gallant Pig	5	0	1
6	Ben and Me	3	3	0
6	Bunnicula	3	2	2
6	Johnny Tremain	0	5	1
6	Little House on the Prairie	4	2	0
6	The Terrible Wave	3	1	2
6	White Mountain	0	1	5
5	Hatchet	0	2	3
5	Little House in the Big Woods	5	0	0
5	My Brother Sam is Dead	0	4	1
5	Old Yeller	1	3	1
5	Rabbit Hill	5	0	0
5	Return of the Indian	1	3	1
5	The Chocolate Touch	3	1	1
5	The Phantom Tollbooth	1	3	1
5	The Witch of Blackbird Pond	0	1	4
5	Treasure Island	0	1	4
4	A Taste of Blackberries	4	0	0
4	Call of the Wild	0	3	1
4	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	2	2	0
4	Chocolate Fever	3	1	0
4	Freedom Train: The Story of Harriet Tubman	2	3	0
4	King of the Wind	3	0	1
4	Misty of Chincoteague	2	2	0

TABLE 1 (continued)
Trade Books' Citation Frequency

Times Cited	Book Title	Grade Level 4	5	6
4	On My Honor	0	4	0
4	Sing Down the Moon	1	3	0
4	The Door in the Wall	1	0	3
4	The Great Gilly Hopkins	0	0	4
4	The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson	1	1	2
4	Trouble River	4	1	0
3	A Stranger Came Ashore	0	0	3
3	Danny, the Champion of the World	0	2	1
3	Follow My Leader	0	3	0
3	Goodnight, Mr. Tom	0	0	3
3	Homer Price	2	1	0
3	Owls in the Family	3	1	0
3	Pigs Might Fly	1	1	1
3	Snow Treasure	2	1	0
3	Superfudge	2	1	0
3	The BFG	1	2	0
3	The Cabin Faced West	3	0	0
3	The Cat Ate My Gymsuit	0	0	3
3	The Girl Who Owned a City	1	2	0
3	The Hundred Dresses	3	0	0
3	The Long Winter	1	2	0
3	The Night Journey	1	1	1
3	The War With Grandpa	3	0	0
3	The Wolves of Willoughby Chase	0	2	1
3	Welcome Home Jelly Bean	0	3	0
3	Wind in the Willows	3	0	0
3	Wish Giver	2	1	0

TABLE 2

Top Five and Lowest Five Reasons for Selecting Trade Books

Factor	Mean Likert Rating	Rank
Subject Matter Presented	4.186	1
Student Interest in Subject	4.179	2
Teacher Estimate of Level	4.112	3
My Previous Reading of Book	4.013	4
Age of Student	3.913	5
Paperback or Hard/Bound	2.215	22
Sex of Student	2.209	23
Illustrations	2.015	24
Cover Design	1.678	25
Name of Publisher	1.348	26

It is noteworthy that the name of the author was ranked 21st on the list.

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